

## SKIN SENSE

Skin Sense—The Newsletter From The Practice of Dr. Alan Rosenbach

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## Don't Let Any Doctor Touch Your Skin - Glamour Magazine

**GLAMOUR**March 23, 2009  
by Jessica Baumgardner**Don't let any Doctor touch your skin...until you read this. In search of a good deal, young women are getting laser hair removal from gynos and Botox from dentists — sometimes with disastrous results. Find out how to stay safe.**

After saving up for months, Amy was ready to get laser treatments for acne scars on her chin. Then she saw an ad in a local paper for a doctor doing cosmetic work; the prices listed were very reasonable. "I did research and discovered he was board-certified in internal medicine, not dermatology, but I thought, Who cares?" recalls the West Coast resident. "His office was in a fancy zip code, when I met him he seemed competent, and he'd gone to a good school. So I gave myself a thirty-seventh-birthday present." After two laser sessions, though, her skin was worse—not only did the scars on her chin appear unchanged, but three new ones had cropped up on her cheeks; they looked like red, angry cigarette burns.

Once, only dermatologists and plastic surgeons did in-office cosmetic procedures such as laser work, liposuction and lip plumping. But the booming aesthetic industry has attracted gynecologists, urologists and even oral surgeons who want a piece of this multibillion-dollar pie—and the results aren't always beautiful.

Close to 60 percent of doctors surveyed by the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery (ASDS) have seen an increase in complications since 2005 from cosmetic work done by nonspecialist M.D.s as well as aestheticians and the like at medi-spas. Derms and plastic surgeons told Glamour about women left with second-degree burns on their pubic area after laser hair removal, lumpy lips from misguided collagen injections and droopy, over-Botoxed lids.

...“They're known as ‘derm pretenders,’” adds Kenneth Beer, M.D., a clinical instructor in dermatology at the University of Miami. “Some even list themselves in the phonebook as ‘dermatologists.’”

Are so-called derm pretenders legal? In a word, yes. “Once medical students have gone through basic training and earned an M.D., they have the right to practice in whatever area of medicine they want to—but that doesn't mean they are fully trained as specialists,” says Kevin B. Weiss, M.D., president of the American Board of Medical Specialties. Doctors who choose to specialize in one area, such as dermatology, undergo years of residency. And when new technologies crop up, they can take seminars to learn the techniques.

Although laws vary by state about who can actually perform the procedures, sometimes it's a free-for-all. “Here in Arizona,” says Dr. Van Dyke, “you could be a window washer, go take a class and start doing laser treatments.” That's where dermatologists are said to have an edge: They typically know exactly how to treat skin complications that may arise.

The trend isn't going away anytime soon. As insurance companies reduce payments to doctors for basic appointments, a lot of M.D.s say they need supplemental income. “When I was practicing family medicine, I was coming home at nine at night and still not making enough money to support my family,” says one doctor who now does Botox, wrinkle fillers and laser treatments at a California medi-spa. “So are there financial reasons for me to have gone into cosmetic dermatology? Absolutely...” “Board certification in a specialty is the only reliable measure of competence,” says Clarence Brad-dock III, M.D., associate dean at Stanford University School of Medicine...

**How to Find a Good Skin Doc**

To check if a doctor is board-certified in dermatology or plastic surgery, you can call the American Board of Medical Specialties (866-275-2267).